

The Patriot Ledger, Fri., Nov. 11, 1966

Once The Scene Of Lavish Living, Now A Duxbury School Site Last Days Near For Opulent Mansion

DUXBURY — The "Wright Estate," a reminder of the opulence of Federal architecture in Duxbury, will soon be demolished to make way for the new \$2.5 million middle school. The 40-acre estate was given to the town last March.

Built in the mid-1800s by Gershom Bradford Weston, it was the showhouse of the town, said William L. McKinney, curator of the Duxbury Historical Society.

Mr. Weston inherited much of his fortune from his father, Ezra, Duxbury's famous ship-builder and owner, and he carried on the business.

He was generous, hospitable, fond of good living and liked having his own way. His elegant mansion, which cost \$60,000, was the boast of Duxbury. But it was destroyed by fire in 1849.

Mrs. Dorothy Wentworth, town historian, said it is believed the house was uninsured and when Mr. Weston rebuilt the house it put him heavily in debt.

He lost ownership of the house through business neglect and pressure of creditors.

George W. Wright and his wife, Georgianna, bought the house around 1867, and over the years added to it.

Anniversary Parade

The Wrights were benefactors of the town and did much



entertaining. A large celebration for the 250th anniversary of Duxbury was held in 1887. Grand Army posts from Kingston, Plymouth and Duxbury assembled and the American band of South Weymouth supplied the martial music. While townspeople and visitors from surrounding communities lined the usually quiet streets, the group paraded through Hall's Corner, Washington Street and St. George Street to the grounds of the house.

It was at the "Wright Estate" that an address was read in 1937, in commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the town's incorporation.

No one seems to know how much property was in the estate, but it contained many acres extending from Pine Hill Avenue to Lover's Lane on St. George Street.

Library Gift

The Wrights, in memory of their son George B. Wright who was killed in the Civil War, gave the lot and present library building to the town, equipped, furnished and partially supplied with books.

The old library building on St. George Street was given in 1907, and since then it has been used as the town offices. It was used by the Wrights as their guest house.

Mr. Wright died in 1897 at the age of 72. His widow, Georgianna, remarried William J. Wright, a relative, in 1900.

In 1892 he paid one-third of the cost of building the Powder Point bridge — \$10,000.

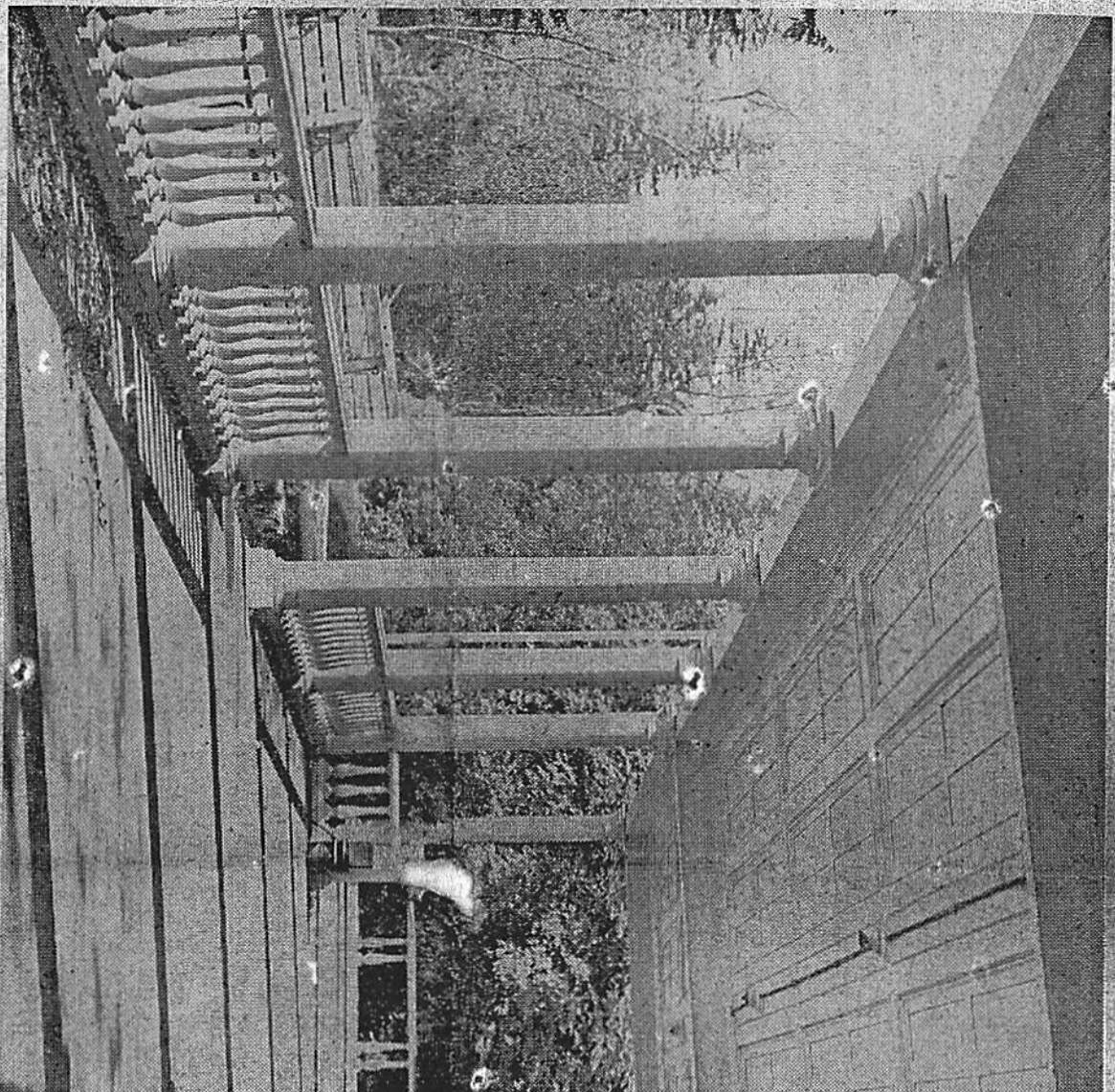
William Wright was a lover of horses. Horace E. Merry, now 90, who used to sell meat to the Wrights, recalled that at one time there were 30 horses on the estate.

Mr. Merry said "Willy" bred colts and race horses. There was a carriage house and barn near the main house, and another large barn on the knoll.

Mr. Merry said Ophion Hill used to be the cemetery for the horses, and each had its own stone marker. A house, which is still on Pine Hill Avenue was the quarters for John Burgess, the coachman, and Frank Davis, the horse trainer's families.

Story by Patriot Ledger correspondent Pauline Pyle

Pictures by Steve Hansen



THE FRONT PORCH overlooks St. George Street. It was here that an address was read out to townspeople 29 years ago when Duxbury celebrated its 300th anniversary.

80 Employees

About 80 people were employed by the Wrights. Police Chief Lawrence C. Doyle recalled Chief Doyle said the Wrights put in the first section of black top in Duxbury on St. George Street in front of their estate. He said the Wrights had their own race track at one time on land behind the town offices.

William Wright died in 1912 at the age of 66.

The house contains 20 rooms. The estate had three private hydrants, its own water system as well as town water, and its own electrically and private electric utility poles.

Howard M. Clark, chairman of the middle school building committee, said the grounds are honeycombed with power lines. "We assume these lines are all dead," he said.

The estate included a well house, water tower, shed, barn, carriage house, stable, garage, ice house, garden house, and Italian marble fountain.

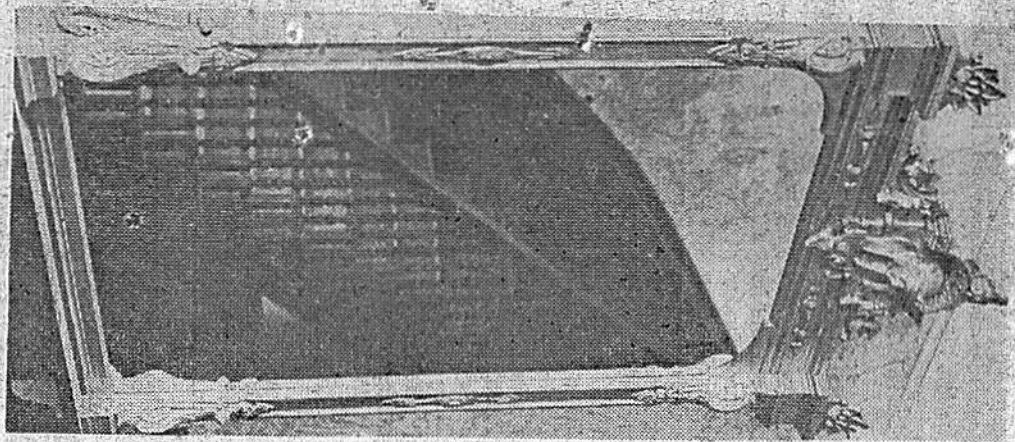
Left To Harvard

With the death of the Wrights, the estate was left to Harvard College.

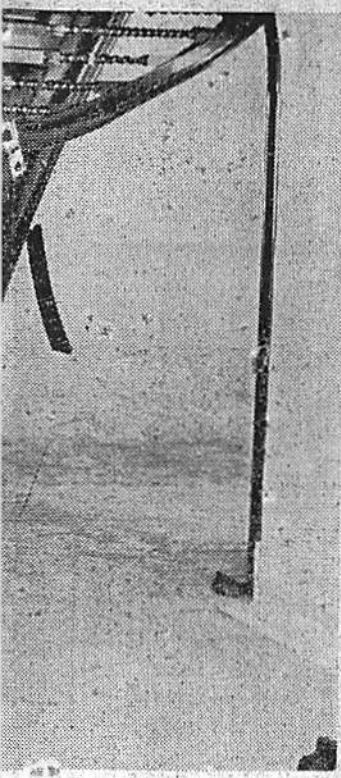
William P. Ellison of Duxbury, one of the last owners, said his father, Eben, and Percy Walker, a realtor, purchased the property around 1928 from Harvard. They "thought a lot of the town" and did not want the estate to get into the wrong hands and be cut up for lots. Eben Ellison later bought out Percy Walker.

Two caretakers and their families have lived on the estate since it was purchased by the Ellisons. Mr. Ellison said his family never lived there. The last residents were Harold Johnson and his family, who lived there for 23 years as caretakers and tenants.

The assessed valuation of the property is \$37,000. Mr. Ellison and his sister,



Retaining its original cypress clapboards, the mansion is an imposing landmark. At right an elegant mirror reflects a long staircase leading from the front hall. Its frame is leafed in gold, and in fine condition.



Mrs. Eulie Rogers, gave the
estate to the town for the new
school. Selectmen at town
meeting said the value of the
gift was in the "six-figure
category."
Commented Mr. Ellison,
"The site is a beautiful spot —
it should belong to the town."

